



HOW TO...

Change the XP boot logo

The Windows XP startup screen is not to everyone's taste, but it's notoriously difficult to change. However, Julian Prokaza has found a shareware program that could save the day

Windows XP offers an unparalleled number of ways to tweak the way it looks, but if you've ever tried to change the boring default startup screen, you'll have quickly reached an impasse. It is possible to edit this image, but Microsoft hasn't made it easy. There are various ways to do it using free utilities, but they invariably involve editing vital system files manually and fiddling with numerous settings. As a simple slip with a system file can render your PC unbootable, these methods are best avoided.

The method we've chosen is far more straightforward and far less prone to problems as a result. It uses a shareware program called BootXP, which you can download from www.bootxp.net. It costs \$8 (around £4.50) to register, but you can use it in trial mode as long as you don't mind a small ad appearing in the corner of your startup screen.

You'll also need an image editor if you want to use an image that doesn't conform to the 640x480, 16-colour requirements of the Windows XP startup screen. We've used Paint Shop Pro (PSP) here, but any image editor should be capable of resizing and adjusting the colour depth of an image.

You can use any image you like as a startup screen, but the 16-colour limit means that simple line art works best. You might be able to get away with a photograph, particularly if you use an image editor's posterise tool to make it look as if it's supposed to have a reduced colour palette.

Finally, remember that you follow these steps at your own risk. While BootXP is pretty foolproof, it nonetheless changes important Windows XP system files and *Computer Shopper* cannot be held

liable for any damage you cause to your PC as a result. The changes it makes can be easily undone, but for safety's sake, create a Windows Restore Point before you try the following for yourself.

1 To use an image of your choice as a startup graphic, you'll need to convert it to a suitable format of 640x480 in 16 colours. If your image is already in this format, you can skip to Step 4. Otherwise, open the image in PSP, then choose Resize from the Image menu.

2 Under Pixel Dimensions in the dialog box, change the units on the drop-down list to Pixels. Change the width under Pixel Dimensions to 640 and note the height. If it's 480 or more, click OK; if it's less than 480, change the height to 480, ignore the new width (it will have changed from 640) and click OK.

3 The image is now resized. If it isn't exactly 640x480 (see Step 2), select the Crop tool. Enter a width of 640 and a height of 480 in the Crop tool dimension boxes on the toolbar, with Pixels selected as the units. This creates a 640x480 crop area that you can position on the image before clicking the Apply button.

4 If you need to optimise the image quality, select Decrease Color Depth, 16 Colors (4 bit) from the Image menu. When the dialog box appears, try the various options to decrease the number of colours in the image and see which looks best before clicking OK. Optimized

RESTORING THE DEFAULT STARTUP SCREEN IN BOOTXP

■ BootXP backs up your original startup settings when you make any changes, which means you can always restore your system to its original startup screen.

■ To restore the original screen, you delete the replacement screens you have created. First, go to BootXP's Options tab and click Show First Run Options Dialog. In the dialog that appears select any lines not labelled 'Backup Line' in turn and click Delete OS Line. Finally, click Cancel and Exit.

Median Cut with Error Diffusion works well for photographs, though few images will look great in 16 colours.

5 Save the image as a Windows or OS/2 Bitmap (*.bmp) and close PSP. Start BootXP. The first time you use the program, you'll need to tell it where the Windows XP Ntoskrnl.exe file is. Click the Browse button, select the \Windows\System32\ folder and click OK. Click Save and Run BootXP then click OK in the two dialog boxes that pop up to continue.

6 Drag and drop the image created in Step 4 on to the Source Image part of the BootXP window. Click Preview Boot Screen. You can drag the progress bar up and down the image, but not left or right. When you're ready, click Set As Your Boot Screen to confirm your changes, then restart your PC to see the new startup screen. **CS**

